

New subspecific taxa of African Cisticolas

by P. A. Clancey

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Critical examination of material of certain African cisticolas *Cisticola* spp. in the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) (BMNH) during the course of a month's visit to that centre in October 1983, most of the specimens there having been collected by that great expert on the group in the years between the wars, the late Rear-Admiral Hubert Lynes, has revealed the desirability of recognising 3 additional subspecific taxa. These are formally described below. For facilities while working at Tring I here acknowledge my deep indebtedness to Mr I. C. J. Galbraith and Mr P. R. Colston of the staff, who courteously met my various requirements.

Cisticola rufilata venustula subsp. nov.

Type. ♂, adult. In non-breeding dress. Mzimba, Malaŵi, at 4300 ft a.s.l. 28 July 1938. Collected for C. W. Benson. In the BMNH collection, B. M. Reg. No. 1939.2.25.155.

Description. Differs from adults in fresh non-breeding dress of the hygric *C.r. ansorgei* Neumann (described from Angola) in having the pileum Hazel (Ridgway, pl. xiv), *versus* Argus Brown (pl. iii), the mantle and scapulars much paler with substantially finer and lighter brown shaft-streaks, the fringes Isabella Color (pl. xxx), against Brownish Olive (same pl.) in *ansorgei*, and with the rump and upper tail-coverts lighter and greyer. Wings paler and tail more pinkish sandy. Over the underside lighter and warmer buff, the breast without the overlay of greyish olive present in *ansorgei*.

Differs from the desertic *C.r. rufilata* (Hartlaub) (proposed from northern South West Africa) in having the pileum a darker reddish ground, this sharply demarcated from the rest of the dorsum, and with the shaft-streaking over the mantle and scapulars much darker and heavier, the pale isabelline fringes imparting a more silvered aspect to the back. Otherwise, the facies is similar.

Measurements. Wings of 7 ♂♂ paratypes from Malaŵi 59-61.5 (av. 60.0) and 2 ♀♀ 55, 56; tails of 7 ♂♂ 50-55.5 (52.3); tails of 2 ♀♀ 47, 48mm.

Material examined. At BMNH *C.r. venustula* 29; *C.r. rufilata*, 10; *C.r. vicinior* Clancey, 17; *C.r. ansorgei*, 52. Also seen: 4 *C.r. venustula* from Okavango R. in Durban Museum.

Range. Occurs locally in *Terminalia* and similar scrub to the south of the range of *C.r. ansorgei* in southeastern Angola and Zambia in Barotse Province to Serenje and Mpika in the Central and Northern Districts, extending eastwards to central and northern Malaŵi at Mzimba and Dedza and adjacent northern Tete, Mozambique. In the west of its range reaches south to the Okavango R. on the Angola/South West Africa border (*vide* Clancey 1980).

Measurements of the Type. Wing (flattened) 61, culmen from skull 15.5, tarsus 22, tail 54 mm.

Remarks. The distributions of the 3 others races of *C. rufilata* as determined at BMNH should now be restructured as follows:—

C.r. rufilata: Central and northern South West Africa (Namibia), the northern Cape (south to Kuruman), Botswana, and the arid west of Matabeleland (Zimbabwe). Perhaps to southwestern Angola.

C.r. vicinior: The plateau of Zimbabwe east of nominate *rufilata*, east to

Rusape, and south to the plateau of the Transvaal south as far as Rustenburg and Pretoria, and the southeastern corner of Botswana. (This is a marked southward extension of the range as given in the recent *S. A. O. S. Checklist* (Clancey (Ed.) 1980).

C. r. ansorgei: The moist highlands of Angola, east to the Zaïre/Zambesi watershed in southern Zaïre (Shaba) and adjacent Zambia. In the east of its range it reaches Kawambwa, to the south of L. Mweru on the Luapula R., and at Luwingu.

Two juvenile specimens of this *cisticola* from northern Lunda in Angola are very rufous above with no restriction of the said colour to the pileum. Such characters suggest the existence of a discrete population of a fifth subspecies, at present unnamed, in the north of Lunda, Angola, and in adjacent regions of the Kasai, Zaïre.

White (1962) incorrectly placed the Malaŵi population of the present *cisticola* in *C. r. ansorgei*.

Cisticola aridula eremica subsp. nov.

Type. ♂, adult. In freshly assumed non-breeding dress. Outpost, 33 miles S.W. of Kamanjab, Kaokoland (Kaokoveld), northwestern South West Africa, at 19° 48'S, 14° 39'E. Collected 26 April 1950 on the BMNH South West African Expedition. In the collection of the BMNH, B. M. Reg. No. 1950.50.576.

Description. Differs from the freshly assumed non-breeding dress of *C. a. kalahari* Ogilvie-Grant (named from the Molopo R. on the northeastern northern Cape/Botswana border) in having the dorsal shaft-streaking both broader and blacker, the light edges to the feathers Cream Color (pl. xvi), against Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix) shading to Clay Color (same pl.) adjacent to the dark shaft-streak; rump greyish cream as opposed to Clay Color in *kalahari*. Similar to *C. a. kalahari* over the ventral surface. Tail darker and greyer, less sandy. In wings, tertials blacker, the pale fringes more sharply etched against the dark centres. Similar in size.

The new taxon differs from *C. a. lobito* Lynes (described from the coastal desert of Angola, to which odd skins of *kalahari* in the BMNH have been incorrectly assigned) in its greater size: wings of ♂♂ *C. a. eremica* 50.5-53.5 *versus* 47-50 in ♂♂ *lobito*, and ♀♀ 46.5-49, against 43-46mm. Dorsally it has broader and more jet black shaft-streaking, the feather edges pale cream rather than near Buckthorn Brown (pl. xv) in *lobito*.

Measurements. Wings of ♂♂ 50.5-53.5; ♀♀ 46.5-49 mm.

Material examined. In BMNH *C. a. eremica*, 3; *C. a. kalahari*, 32; *C. a. caligina* Clancey, 17; *C. a. lobito*, 37. Also available material of *C. a. traylori* Benson & Irwin, *C. a. perplexa* White and *C. a. tanganyika* Lynes, and a further 13 ♂♀ *C. a. eremica* in southern African collections.

Range. Presently known from Kaokoland (Kaokoveld), northwestern South West Africa. Probably extends to western parts of Ovamboland and adjacent southwestern Angola to the south of the range of *C. a. lobito*.

Measurement of the Type. Wing 51, culmen 12.5, tarsus 20, tail 40 mm.

Remarks. The revised ranges of the other 2 of the 3 races of this dry country *cisticola* occurring in the South African Sub-Region are as follows:—

C. a. kalahari: Damaraland and Kavango, South West Africa, in the west from the Erongo Mts and the Waterberg southwards, Botswana (centred on the Kalahari), the northern and parts of the eastern Cape (south in the east to Aberdeen, Somerset East and Cradock), western Orange Free State, and arid western Transvaal and western Zimbabwe. In northeast to southern Barotse

Province, Zambia. There is some evidence from the material examined that some populations of this race are subject to post-breeding nomadism or else drought-related movements.

C.a. caligina: Transkei, Natal interior (mid-Tugela R. drainage), Zululand, eastern Swaziland, Mozambique in the south of Sul do Save, Transvaal (except arid western fringe) and the plateau of Zimbabwe. Also marginally to parts of southern Zambia, but limits in this sector not critically determined.

The small-sized, dorsally richly coloured *C.a. lobito* does not occur within the limits of the South African Sub-Region and appears to be restricted to the arid coastal strip of Angola.

***Cisticola subruficapilla euroa* subsp. nov.**

Type. ♀, sub-adult, in recently moulted non-breeding dress. Fauresmith, Orange Free State, South Africa, at 5500 ft a.s.l. 24 June 1937. Collected by Rear-Admiral Hubert Lynes. In the BMNH collection, B.M. Reg. No. 1941.12.2.695.

Description. Is currently associated with *C.s. jamesi* Lynes, described from Mortimer on the mid-Great Fish R. in the interior of the eastern Cape, but differs subspecifically in having the pileum dull, more vinaceous, less fulvous, with the dark shaft-streaking vestigial or absent (prominent in *jamesi*); mantle and scapulars duller and greyer (about Light Brownish Olive (pl. xxx), *versus* Dresden Brown (pl.xv)), the dark shaft-streaking again virtually absent, and with the rump greyer. Rufous over the remiges duller, more reddish, less ochraceous-tawny. Size similar.

Compared with *C.s. karasensis* (Roberts) (named from the Karas Mtn ranges of southern South West Africa) is much less streaked or totally unstreaked on the head-top and back, which latter is browner, less grey. Differs sharply below, being less whitish over the ground of the breast, rather buffier, with the breast more heavily flecked with light olivaceous, and with the sides and flanks more overlaid with dusky olive.

Measurements. Wings of 4 ♂♂ 54-59 (56.3), tails 49-53 (51.5); 6 ♀♀ wings 50-52.5 (51.0), tails 44-48 (47.0) mm.

Material examined. In BMNH: *C.s. euroa*, 5; *C.s. jamesi*, 40; *C.s. subruficapilla* (Smith), 80; *C.s. subruficapilla* \cong *C.s. jamesi* (Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth — Grahamstown), 50; *C.s. namaqua* Lynes, 30; *C.s. karasensis* (including *barbiensis* (Roberts)), 10; *C.s. windhoekensis* (Roberts), 20. Also a further 5 ♂♀ *C.s. euroa* in Durban Museum collection.

Range. Western Orange Free State (W. of c. 26° 30'E.) and the northeastern Cape along the middle Orange R., southwest in this sector to about De Aar, and west north of the Orange through Griqualand West to the Langeberg, southern Gordonia and the eastern parts of Bushmanland (at Pofadder).

Measurements of the Type: Wing 51, culmen 13, tarsus 18, tail 47.5 mm.

Remarks. *C.s. jamesi* is the subspecies of the Great and Little Karoos and the rainshadow areas of the main coastal ranges of the southern Cape mountains, east to the karoid country in the interior of the eastern Cape. It intergrades at the eastern end of the said ranges with the more hygric nominate subspecies between Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth and the Zwartkops estuary and Grahamstown. It is noteworthy that the coastal distribution of the nominate race of *C. subruficapilla* is effectively sundered by the valley of the Great Braak R., in the west of the southern Cape, where elements of *jamesi* thrust on to the coastal strip.

White (1962) incorrectly extended the range of *C.s. namaqua* east to the

Orange Free State to include the present new taxon. In the recent S. A. O. S. *Checklist* (Clancey (Ed.) 1980) it was associated in part with *jamesi*, as stated in the description. *C.s. namaqua* is restricted to the dry west of the Cape north of the Berg R.

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Address: Dr P. A. Clancey, Milner Gardens Hotel, 75 Marriott Road, Durban 4001, South Africa.

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The status of *Alcedo semitorquata heuglini* Laubmann, 1925

by P. A. Clancey

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Subspecifically relevant variation in the Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata* Swainson of the eastern and southern Afrotropics was first discussed by Laubmann (1925) and later commented on by Sclater (1930), Chapin (1939), Clancey (1951), Benson (1952) and again by Clancey (1978). In the 1978 paper, Clancey showed that variation in this species affects wing-length, bill mass and ventral colouration, and that 2 races are recognisable, these being nominate *A. semitorquata* of South Africa and *A.s. tephria* Clancey of eastern, central and west-central Africa. In the same contribution, Laubmann's *A.s. heuglini* was placed as a synonym of *A.s. semitorquata*, in effect rendering the latter polytopic in status. In October 1983, the opportunity was taken to re-examine variation in this kingfisher on the basis of the series in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), (BMNH), with a view to determining the status of the isolated Ethiopian highlands population and as a correlate the validity of Laubmann's *heuglini*.

My studies at BMNH confirm that Ethiopian birds are not separable from those of South Africa on size: wings of 12 South African ♂ ♀ in BMNH were 82-86.5, 25 ♂ ♀ in southern African collections 82.5-88 mm, *versus* 83.5-89 mm in 7 ♂ ♀ from Ethiopia (BMNH). Ethiopian birds do, however, differ from the South African series in showing markedly less well-developed lateral half-collar panels, which in the southern form extend over an entire lateral third of the breast. While juvenile specimens were not available from Ethiopia, they will surely be found to resemble adults in the extent of the half-collar development, as is the case elsewhere. In my earlier studies I failed to appreciate the subspecific relevance of the variation in half-collar size, which showed up saliently in the BMNH material.